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ABSTRACT

Foreign students make up an important, and growing, segment of higher education in the United States. Reasons why foreign students come to the United States to study include the following: (1) the United States offers a serious approach to higher education in which students receive appropriate training and generally are able to complete the training; (2) the United States is an open society; and (3) programs take a reasonable length of time to complete. The use of English, which is a language college students from foreign countries have generally studied, is also a consideration. To meet the needs of foreign graduate and professional students, universities in the United States should emphasize skills, academic values, and learning strategies, rather than moral or religious values; be open to foreign ideas; be expeditious; insist on good English and good English-language instruction; teach diversity of ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds; respect, honor, and help preserve the language and culture of the foreign student; orient foreign students' studies to the type of work they will be doing in their native countries; develop international exchange programs for both students and faculty; deal with United States' own ethnicity and parochialism; and engage in worldwide research and research on international issues. (JDD)

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FOREIGN STUDENTS: CATALYST FOR REDUCING PAROCHIALISM

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This little talk is dedicated to the many students who over the years have taught me so much. If I have not learned very well, it's not their fault. They have tried. A lot of what I want to say today I have learned from the many students from overseas who have come to the University of Pittsburgh, as well as from many students living and studying overseas with whom I have interacted over the years.

The essential content of this short talk can be divided into three areas. First, the facts and the figures of foreign students; second, some reasons why they come to the U.S.A.; and then, third, how they can and do affect our curriculum and reduce our parochialism.

First, here are some facts and figures. It is rather interesting that according to a publication called Open Doors, in 1954-55 there were 34,000 students from overseas in the United States. They constituted 1.4 percent of our enrollment. In '82-'83, that number had increased almost tenfold. There were about 337,000 students from overseas. Those are students who got here legally. The number is probably higher because of the way we account for the number of overseas students. We don't know how many students got here some other way and do not not identify themselves as foreign students. But the important thing about these figures is that the percentage went to 2.6 percent of the total enrollment in higher education. It is not only that foreign students make up an important segment of higher education in the United States, but also it is a growing segment. And as our domestic enrollments decline, the percentage will continue to grow as the enrollments from overseas go up. The percentage of foreign students goes up dramatically, depending upon world economics and political conditions.

We've already seen a little bit of this here at this institution. We have a Core Program in the Department of Higher Education. It is required of all doctoral students. In the year I coordinated the Core Program, 1981-1982, twenty percent of the student enrollment in that Core Program came from overseas. Think what that does to the curriculum. The last time I taught the course, Curriculum in Higher Education, one half the class consisted of foreign students. The students come, as you might expect, mainly from OPEC or other oil-rich countries. But let me just give you some statistics about that for the University of Pittsburgh. Approximately 6 percent of the head count on this campus are students who are foreign students. There are almost

1,700. Over 300 are undergraduates, over 1,300 are graduates. Most of the graduate students are in the professions. Half of the undergraduates are in the professions schools, mainly education and engineering. The other half may indeed be in pre-professional courses, for example pre-med, pre-law, or the first two years of teaching. This gives you some idea of foreign student enrollment here, and I suspect, at other large universities of the first rank.

Now, let me suggest some reasons why foreign students come here. The best way to do that is to recall for you a conversation that I had with the director of an organization that sends thousands of students to the United States. This conversation occurred overseas as we were standing around talking before lunch was served.

He was in a mood to talk freely I thought, so I said to him, "Tell me. Why did you send so many students to the United States, or why do so many students want to come to the United States? Now, I could think of some answers, but I want to hear your answer. I know my answers. I don't know if they're right, but I know I'd like to hear your answers." I thought that I knew something. I thought that I might be able to predict what he would say, but his answer surprised me.

He said, "Number one, you are SERIOUS. Number two, you're free and open to other ideas, you're an open society. And number three, it doesn't take too much time to get through." I asked him to expound on that a bit. He said, "Well, when I said you are serious, what I mean is that when we send students to university here, it is likely that the institute would be on strike. To me that's not serious higher education. Or the students come back and say they never saw their professor, that in class there was a graduate student, or maybe nobody came to teach. No explanation. No nothing. That's not serious education. When, in the U.S.A., you say you're going to train somebody in, for example, physical therapy, medicine, some health profession, nursing, or library science or whatever it is, in an accredited institution, you're not going to be fooling around. You actually train the students in what you say, if it's a reputable institution accredited for that course of study. We have found from experience that when we send the student to the United States to study the student completes the work. I don't know what it is, but they complete it. We send the students to study here or in neighboring countries and the completion rate is terrible. We have a lot of students here and very few graduates."

Next, he said, "You're open. I can't tell you how many times the Polish Ambassador has contacted us, offering to accept students in Polish universities, even in professional schools which are very hard to enter, like medicine, engineering, and so forth. And at no cost! There is no tuition lost. All they have to do is get themselves over there, and we pay for that. And for living costs, they even give a stipend for the students.

There's no tuition. So many places for them in medicine, in mining engineering, whatever. How many places do they want? We can't get students to go. It's far away, lonely and it's not open to other ideas, not a free society. The university is a closed society in service to a totalitarian state."

Third, "You don't take forever. There are many fine institutes around the world, for example, in countries like France or Germany, where Ph.D.s are very difficult to get. They're high level and very difficult. If we send the students for a Ph.D. in sociology at a fine German university, for example, the first year they'd have to learn German. The second thing is how long would the doctorate take? Well, maybe as in a Japanese university, twenty years. We are a developing country; we don't have that luxury of time."

Something that he didn't say but implied in this discussion, was that English was an important consideration. To be a student in another country is difficult. I have been a student at many universities in several foreign countries. It is educational, but it takes an awful lot of psychic energy. It takes hard, long studying. It takes a high level of language competency and dedication. You not only have to listen to lectures, but write papers, short and long, with proper grammar and vocabulary appropriate to the country and the discipline. You write all examinations in that language. And that is not something you decide to do on a whim. It entails an enormous investment, as all of you here know. To make my point let me be extreme. Would one put that enormous investment into learning Icelandic, in order to study in Iceland? Even though Icelandic is a rich language, and even though there's a fine university in Rejkavik, would it be worth the years of language study? Once you were done learning Icelandic to that level, what could you do with it? Could you live and work in Iceland, a country of a quarter of a million people? If you are going to invest that much time and energy, you're likely to learn English because, fortunately, or unfortunately, English today has become the language of international communication. I don't mean to imply that it is the only world language. Far from it. There's French, Arabic, German, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish, for example. I don't mean to imply that it is any richer than any other language. Far from it, but English is simply a very important language to be able to know in the world of the 1980's. Therein lies one of our North American problems--that we can go all over the world, using our own language. We don't have to learn anyone else's language.

We have seen a few facts about foreign students in the United States, and some reasons why they come. Now with respect to what we can do to meet the needs of foreign students and reduce some of our own parochialism, there are a number of books which are excellent for reference purposes. One of them is Professor Tonkin's Education and the World View. Another is Internationalizing the Curriculum and the Campus by Maurice Harari.

What I will concentrate on primarily is graduate and professional students. Professor Tonkin concentrated this morning on the undergraduate. How we relate to foreign students in our universities and how we react to them has an important effect on parochialism. Students come here with a serious purpose and we have to be serious in what we do. We have to have high expectations. We have to <u>produce</u> in terms of teaching people skills, academic values and learning strategies. I really believe that's why most foreign students come to the United States--to become educated, to learn from us. I don't think they come here to be proselitized. I don't think they come here to be turned into Christians, or to be turned into capitalists, or to be turned into patriotic Americans. I think that is what turns people off when they go to some other countries. I think they come here primarily to acquire knowledge and skills, and our job is to teach them. They are no different from our other students in this respect.

The second point is that we have to be open to foreign ideas. We have to let foreign students break down our parochialism. Let them challenge our thinking. Let them bring to the way we look at the world their own experiences. Their world view is different from ours, and that often will change us. It will open us up. It will make us more interesting. It will make the university a more interesting place to learn. After all, that is at the heart of the real purpose of a university, implied in its name, a place of learning where ideas, values, skills, and knowledge can freely compete for our attention and support. Most of our universities would be very parochial institutions were it not for the foreign students. Many of our institutions do not even draw heavily from other states, so foreign students provide much of what is cosmopolitan about them. I remember many terms that were brought to me by foreign students, terms that I probably would otherwise have not known, but I was educated and was enlightened. I was enlightened many, many times but I just wrote down a few examples to share with you. "Cordoba Manifesto," one of the most important documents in Latin American higher education, is as alive and relevant today as it was when promulgated by students over 60 years ago. You heard this morning about the "Helsinki Accords," an important document in defining concepts in human rights, not only in the United States, but all over the world. It is one of the most sophisticated international political weapons one could devise, with important long-term potential. These are the examples of ideas, phrases, and terms (and many more could be cited) which are often brought to our consciousness by foreign students.

My third point is that we have to be expeditious. We not only have to help foreign students get here, but also to return. Students coming to the United States to learn are engaged in a process filled with conflict, particularly when developing countries are the sending countries, related to the "brain drain," cultural imperialism, and the issue of implanting our values and systems on students. It is an issue even though that

implantation is not conscious, when it happens automatically because a student lives here for a number of years, learns our language and our ways, makes friendships here, reads our books, takes our exams, writes our papers, and interacts in class with United States students. For many foreign students it would be so easy to stay, and so hard to return. We can't keep them here, as much as we like them. Our best interest is served when they return. In most cases some one or some organization is supporting the students, and they expect them back, educated in what they were sent to learn, trained to do what we said we would train them to do. There are expectations for these students. The sending country expects them back, expects them to help with the enormous problems at home, expects them to contribute to national development, to help, to build, to teach, to heal, to lead. They can't do that by staying here.

The fourth point is that we have to insist on good English and good English language instruction. We owe that to those who come here. They will never have the opportunity again, there will not likely be another time when the need and the pressure is so great to learn English, and to learn it well, to speak, read, and write it at a level acceptable in an academic setting. This is not to suggest any kind of linguistic imperialism or superiority. We need to turn this around in the curriculum, to help our United States student see the need for language instruction, to see that people around the world are often proficient in several languages, and to recognize that in most of the world you are not a member of the community of scholars unless you speak, read, and write at least two languages. You wouldn't be considered a scholar if you never bothered to learn a second language. In fact many scholars in Europe and the Third World are competent in three or more languages, and that is also true of many of our graduate students here.

The fifth point is that we have to use the opportunity presented by foreign students to teach diversity in education. We have to learn from our foreign students the diversity of ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. We thought of ourselves at times as a melting pot. In terms of the rest of the world we are a very small part of the melting pot. We may be more diverse than some of the more homogeneous countries, but in terms of much of the third world, we are not nearly as diverse as we might have thought. It is interesting to note the people in class who often see things so differently because they come from a really different culture. They often open our eyes in class because they see things so much differently, and have such a diverse perspective, and ask so many penetrating questions. I remember for example, one student who is here with us now, who opened my eyes, and I think those of others in class, when he reported on a research paper in class: on the rich history of Islamic higher education. I suppose we had all thought that higher education started in Italy in the early days of the Italian renaissance, at Bologna or Solerno. In fact, our study of history regularly leaves out the contributions of those whom we don't know or don't care to recognize.

My sixth point is that we have to respect, honor, and help preserve the language and culture of our foreign students to the extent that we can, by trying to speak their language and by respecting and learning about their culture. We can do this is many ways--in class and out of class--through social activities, through papers that we ask them to write, through texts used in class, courses we offer in the curriculum which relates to other cultures, and by using reference lists which are not totally confined to the English language.

This is not a problem which has easy solutions. But it is a very serious issue and the only way I know how to deal with it is to have respect, honor the language and the culture of others and help to preserve them. Language and culture are so closely tied to one another, and both define the context in which the individual lives out his or her being. It is difficult to imagine how a people would express their culture, or pass it on to the young, without language.

I remember a day a couple of years ago when we were at the ends of the earth, or so it seemed, at the edge of the bush in a tiny village in Papua New Guinea. This is a new island nation in the South Pacific, with approximately 750 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups, many of them isolated and living, in part, in the Stone Age. We were visiting a school on the top of a hill in order to assess the progress of educational reform there. One of the objectives of the government was to improve community education, to help each village and ethnic group get to know its cultural heritage, its roots, its mythology, history, and background. And I was sitting on top of this hillside talking with the teachers, the pastor and elders about their village and little school.

"Now what are you doing about community education? How are you getting all of these things into the curriculum in the school?" They looked at each other.

"We have forgotten plenty. It's gone. The old men have died and we don't know who we are. We are using your language and some of us have Western clothes and some of us have transistor radios, but that's not us. We have for gotten. We are lost. We wouldn't know what to teach and there is no one here to teach the old ways. No one speaks the language any more, and our chants and stories and our roots have gone with it!"

Language and culture are so intimately connected that when one is lost the other is soon to go. When they are forgotten, self respect, self-image, and self-identity are lost also.

My seventh point is that we have to make opportunities for foreign students to orient their work here to what they need to learn, to what they need to take home. I think of that so often in working at the university because helping the foreign students to orient their work to what they need to take home will break

down our own parochialism. As we share papers, ideas and classes, we learn from one another. And when a foreign student does an excellent paper on the history of Islamic higher education, as in the example above, he not only opens our eyes, but he also preserves his cultural identity. When a foreign student does a dissertation on a subject that helps achieve great improvements in his country, it gets us to think of ourselves in a little different way. We start to ask questions about our own country. We have to help students at times to be successful with critically needed skills and knowledge and, if we continually press them to do things that are related to North America and North American culture, we do them a disservice. We do ourselves a disservice. We don't learn from them. What am I going to learn from a foreign student who does some research on American higher education? Well, maybe something, but I'll learn a lot more if he does research into higher education in his own country.

The eighth point I'd like to make is that we have to work out cooperative relationships to reform universities and programs for these students so that we can make exchanges between the United States and other countries for both students and faculty. And this also helps the faculty reduce parochialism, both personally and institutionally.

My ninth point is that we have to deal with our own ethnicity. We don't like to admit it but it's no secret that some minority groups are not comfortable about coming to our country. Some of our foreign students are not comfortable on some of our campuses. We're too ego-centered. We see ourselves as almost beyond reproach, and others, often, as inferior. We're going to have to deal with that not only because of our relationships with the world but in order to save our own society. For example, since 1970 the number of Hispanics in the United States has risen by 61 percent. By 1990 there will be 30,000,000 Hispanics in the United States. They will make up the majority of people in places like Los Angeles, Miami, San Diego, San Antonio, and El Paso, and in some states. They dominate public affairs in these areas, and will be a potent national political force. Our foreign students may help us deal with the issue of our own parochialism, and they may have some experiences from living in very heterogeneous societies which will be helpful to us.

My last point is that we have to continue to engage in world-wide research, and research on international issues. We need to build this network of scholars who communicate with one another across national and ideological borders. And it falls not only on foreign students but the North American students to break down our ethnic and parochial superstitions. After all, knowledge is a very important tool and the sharing of that knowledge is essential to a world growing ever smaller, closer, and more integrated. Knowledge isn't wisdom. The knowledge that we have won't make us wise or make us good but it may help. I'd

rather have knowledge than be without it, and to share in the search for knowledge with faculty and students from overseas is an opportunity to be valued at this university.

Knowledge is a very important tool. It gives us control over ourselves if we use it with wisdom. Our business is to impart knowledge and to seek it and I think that relates not only to our North American students but to our foreign students as well.

Now I see that I have taken more of your time than I intended. You've been an excellent audience and I've enjoyed it so much but I have to end. Thank You.

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